Caught in Translation

*Studies on Versions
of Late Antique Christian Literature*

Edited by

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Contents

Notes on Contributors VII

Introduction: Trajectory, Marginalia, Selection: Issues in the Study of
Versions of Late Antique Christian Literature 1

Madalina Toca and Dan Batovici

- 1 Latin and Oriental Translations of the *Epistola ad Timotheum de morte apostolorum* Attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite 9

Caroline Macé and Michael Muthreich

- 2 The Armenian Translations of John Chrysostom: The Issue of
Selection 35

Emilio Bonfiglio

- 3 The Armenian Reception of the Homilies of Jacob of Serugh: New
Findings 64

Andy Hilkens

- 4 St. Isaac of Nineveh's *Gnostic Chapters* in Sogdian: The Identification of
an Anonymous Text from Bulayïq (Turfan) 85

Adrian Pirtea

- 5 Sacred Spices: The Syriac Reception of Gregory of Nyssa's *Homilies on
the Song of Songs* 104

Marion Pragt

- 6 Four New Syriac Witnesses to the Middle Recension of the Ignatian
Corpus 122

Dan Batovici

- 7 The Reception of Isidore of Pelusium in Its Ancient Versions: Latin as a
Case-Study 138

Madalina Toca

- 8 Manuscripts and Margins: The Case of the Late Mediaeval Slavonic
Hexaemeron Collection or *Šestodnevnik* and Its Greek Source Text 160

Lara Sels

- 9 Between Translation and Rewriting: The Nag Hammadi Corpus and the
First Book of Enoch 180
Francesco Berio
- 10 Translating Greek to Old Nubian: Reading between the Lines of
Ps.-Chrysostom's *In venerabilem crucem sermo* 204
Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei and Alexandros Tsakos
- 11 A Fourth Ethiopic Witness to the *Shepherd of Hermas* 241
Ted M. Erho
- 12 A Byzantine Bureaucrat and Arabic Philosopher: Ibrāhīm ibn Yuḥannā
al-Anṭākī and His Translation of *On the Divine Names* 4.18–35 267
Samuel Noble
- Manuscript Index 313
Index of Modern Authors 317
Index of Ancient Sources 324
Index of People, Subjects, and Places 328

Translating Greek to Old Nubian: Reading between the Lines of Ps.-Chrysostom's *In venerabilem crucem sermo*

Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei and Alexandros Tsakos

1 Introduction

This study revisits the longest known text in Old Nubian to date, the pseudo-Chrysostomian “Sermon on the Venerable Cross,” whose *editio princeps* was furnished by Gerald M. Browne.¹ The Greek *Vorlage* of the Nubian text is known under catalog number CPG 4525 and is attested in more than 50 manuscripts in Greek, as well as in translations in several other languages.² The goal of this chapter is to examine the Old Nubian translation in comparison with other witnesses in Greek, Latin, and Syriac, in order to determine a plausible dating and to highlight a number of particular aspects of this translation and the possible reflection they might offer of the religious views held in this remote area of Christianity. Because of the relative obscurity of Nubia in comparison to the rest of medieval Christianity, some introductory remarks on Christian Nubia are at place, as well as some pointers regarding its linguistic situation and literary traditions.

2 Christian Nubia and Its Multilingual Character

Nubia as a geographical area is conventionally identified with the Middle Nile region, a stretch of the Nile between Khartoum and Aswan, where the river passes through a series of at least 6 rapids, called cataracts. For various reasons, the area of the Second Cataract divides Nubia in Upper and Lower Nubia. The geomorphology of the Second Cataract region sets a barrier, since beyond that

1 Gerald M. Browne, *Chrysostomus Nubianus: An Old Nubian Version of Ps. Chrysostom, In venerabilem crucem sermo* (Rome, Barcelona: Papyrologica Castroctaviana, 1984).

2 Mauritius Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum, volumen 11: Ab Athanasio ad Chrysostomum* (Turnout: Brepols, 1974), no. 4525 (henceforth, CPG); J.A. de Aldama, *Repertorium Pseudochrysostomicum* (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1965), no. 494.

point it becomes exceedingly difficult to navigate upstream. Lower Nubia can be seen, both geographically and historically, as more linked with Egypt and thus with the Mediterranean world than Upper Nubia, which seems a bit cut off from the north.

Nubia is a broader term including beyond geography and history, people and their language. The Nubians are people whose native language belongs to the Nubian family within the Northern East Sudanic sub-group of the Nilo-Saharan phylum.³ Although traces of their language family can be found in the Nile Valley from the Pharaonic era already,⁴ their origins seem to be located west of the Nile and in regions as far away as Kordofan and Darfur, until ca. the fourth century CE, when they take advantage of the collapse of the Meroitic empire—the last state formation of ancient Sudan, known as Kush—and gradually gain the control of the Middle Nile region.

Thus begins the millennium of the Nubian Middle Ages, an era that may be identified with the period that this region was ruled by at least three Christian kingdoms:

- The area between the First and the Third Cataracts (Lower Nubia) belonged to the kingdom of *Nobadia* with its capital at Faras or Qasr Ibrim.
- Upper Nubia between the Third Cataract and a point between the Fifth Cataract and the junction of the Nile with the river Atbara was the territory of the kingdom of *Makuria* with its capital at Old Dongola.
- To the south of Makuria until an unknown point in Central Sudan (the area south of the junction of the Blue and White Niles) stretched the kingdom of *Alwa* with its capital at Soba.

It is worthwhile underlining that Alwa is a Nubian name, probably linked to the Old Nubian word *ṣpoγ* meaning “rain,” since Alwa lies in latitudes where it rains indeed, in contrast with the rest of the Middle Nile, which is one of the most arid regions in the world. Nobadia and Makuria had different names in the Nubian language, *Migi* and *Dotawo*, respectively.⁵

Nubia was indeed a multilingual society, where apart from the local tongue called Old Nubian, Greek and Coptic were also widely used, while certainly

3 Lionel Bender, “Nilo-Saharan,” in *African Languages: An Introduction*, eds. B. Heine and D. Nurse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 43–73.

4 See Karola Zibelius-Chen, “Nubisches” Sprachmaterial in hieroglyphischen und hieratischen Texten: Personennamen, Appellativa, Phrasen vom Neuen Reich bis in die napatanische und meroitische Zeit (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011).

5 See Giovanni Ruffini, *The Bishop, the Eparch and the King: Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim IV (P. QI IV)* (Warsaw: Raphael Taubenschlag Foundation, 2014), 38–43 for a commentary on the governmental structure of Dotawo in which the evidence for the identification of Dotawo with both Makuria and Alwa is presented.

Arabic became increasingly influential.⁶ We also know that Syriac was learnt in some literate circles.⁷ Within this linguistic environment, Old Nubian may be regarded as a “literary *koinē*.”⁸ Although it is still uncertain to what extent this *koinē* was perceived to be different from the Old Nubian vernacular spoken by the common people, we may be dealing here with “diglossia,” a situation in which in the same speech community “two or more varieties of the same language are used by some speakers under different conditions.”⁹ The distribution and precise definition of the “high” variety of Old Nubian versus the “low” or vernacular remains to be studied, but it appears that the Christian literary texts transmitted in Old Nubian belong to the first category, being an exemplary form of this literary *koinē*. This literary Old Nubian is characterized by the incorporation of a number of Greek loanwords related to the sphere of Christianity, and also includes what appears to be a broad stratum of pre-Nubian loan words, mainly related to warfare, statecraft, and domestic life,¹⁰ perhaps inherited together with some of the state structures of the Meroites.

It is unclear whether literary Old Nubian presents an earlier, more archaic form of the language compared to the vernacular, or is in fact more innovative and artificial, developed through literary practices such as translation. In other words, we do not know whether literary Old Nubian should be compared to post-classical Latin, the archaic written form that lived alongside vernacular Romance languages, or whether Old Nubian is more like the Gothic of Wulfila’s Bible translation, whose word order and syntax have been strongly influenced by Greek.¹¹ Only a more secure datation of the Old Nubian texts based on linguistic evidence and a theory of Nubian language change will allow us to determine the situation more precisely.

6 Grzegorz Ochała, “Multilingualism in Christian Nubia: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches,” *Dotaŵo* 1 (2014): 1–50.

7 Jan van Ginkel and Jacques van der Vliet, “A Syriac Alphabet from Qasr Ibrim,” in *Nubian Voices: New Texts and Studies on Christian Nubian Culture*, eds. Adam Łajtar, Grzegorz Ochała, and Jacques van der Vliet (Warsaw: Raphael Taubenschlag Foundation, 2015), 45–52.

8 Claude Rilly, *Le méroïtique et sa famille linguistique* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 166.

9 Charles A. Ferguson, “Diglossia,” *Word* 15.2 (1959): 325–40, at 325.

10 Rilly, *Le méroïtique et sa famille linguistique*, 285–88.

11 Winfred P. Lehmann, “Gothic and the Reconstruction of Proto-Germanic,” in *The Germanic Languages*, eds. Ekkehard König and Johan van der Auwera (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 19–37, at 34.

3 Religious Literature in Christian Nubia

3.1 *Types of Literacy*

The internal written sources from the Medieval Nubian kingdoms vary considerably.¹² Alwa has produced mainly graffiti executed on either the walls of ancient and medieval monuments or the natural outcrops of mainly sandstone quarries. This type of literacy is in strong contrast with the rich material of funerary stelae¹³ and manuscripts that have been discovered in Lower Nubia. Especially the latter are definitely linked with literacy in Coptic Upper Egypt, where the centers of inspiration, if not of production, of these manuscripts should be searched. Finally, the evidence from Makuria seems to indicate that originally this was also a region where graffiti on walls of official buildings, as well as natural outcrops—this time granite rocks on the banks of the most far-away territories of the kingdom¹⁴—were the main carriers of literacy. Manuscripts, however, have been found in Upper Nubia too, and the difference in numbers compared with Lower Nubia, should be considered as rather a cultural than a geographic marker.

In total, Nubian sites dating back to the medieval period have produced some more than 300 published manuscript items, ranging from small fragments to entire codices. Of those, 192 are in Old Nubian, 108 are in Greek, and 61 in Coptic, with some overlaps occurring in the language distribution due to bilingual manuscripts, namely in Greek and Old Nubian.¹⁵

Coptic, Greek, and Old Nubian manuscripts are divided into 168 items of documentary character, 83 literary, 39 liturgical, and 8 of unidentified character. Moreover, among the 83 literary texts, 26 are biblical and 14 subliterary. These, along with the 39 liturgical manuscripts will also be left out of the discussion here, which focuses on the most important example of Patristic literature found in Nubia. Finally, among the remaining 43 literary texts, just 20 are writ-

12 Unless otherwise stated, the following discussion is based on statistics provided by the Database of Medieval Nubian Texts: <http://www.dbmnt.uw.edu.pl>. Last accessed, 9-11-2019.

13 See Jacques van der Vliet, *Catalogue of the Coptic Inscriptions in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum (I. Khartoum Copt.)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003) and Adam Łajtar, *Catalogue of the Greek Inscriptions in the Sudan National Museum at Khartoum (I. Khartoum Greek)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003).

14 See Alexandros Tsakos, "On the Medieval Inscriptional Material from M.D.A.S.P.," *Meroitica* 23 (2007): 235–46.

15 Manuscripts in Arabic are not included in the DBMNT, due to lack of related studies because of the erroneous assumption that Arabic was in use only by outsiders to the Nubian cultures of the Christian Middle Ages, see Ochała, "Multilingualism," 27.

ten in Old Nubian, and among those stand out *The Miracle of Saint Menas*,¹⁶ a martyrdom of Saint George¹⁷ and a martyrdom of Saint Epimachus,¹⁸ the so-called *Stauros Text*,¹⁹ and the so-called *Book of the Investiture of the Archangel Michael*.²⁰ None of these works are assigned to any Father of the Church and therefore they do not belong to Patristic literature.²¹

3.2 *Patristic Literature in Old Nubian*

In order to contextualize the pseudo-Chrysostomian homily under scrutiny in this study, only a very small section of the manuscript finds from Nubia can be taken into account, namely those that belong to Patristic literature in Old Nubian, as well as (pseudo-)Chrysostomian works in Greek and Coptic. So, until the manuscript collections from Qasr Ibrim and Gebel Adda are properly published,²² the catalogue of Patristic literature in Old Nubian consists of only four works:

- 16 El-Shafie El-Guzuuli and Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei, *The Miracle of Saint Mina* (The Hague, Tirana: Uitgeverij, 2012).
- 17 Gerald M. Browne, *The Old Nubian Martyrdom of Saint George* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998).
- 18 Gerald M. Browne, "An Old Nubian Version of the Martyrdom of Saint Epimachus," in *50 Years of Polish Excavations in Egypt and the Near East: Acts of the Symposium at the Warsaw University, 1986* (Warsaw: Polish Center of Mediterranean Archeology, 1992), 74–77; Gerald M. Browne, "An Old Nubian Translation of the Martyrdom of Saint Epimachus," *Le Muséon* 115 (2002): 69–76.
- 19 Gerald M. Browne, "Griffith's Stauros-Text," *Studia Papyrologica* 22 (1983): 75–119.
- 20 Alexandros Tsakos, "The *Liber Institutionis Michaelis* in Medieval Nubia," *Dotawo* 1 (2014): 51–62; Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei, Vincent Pierre-Michel Laisney, Giovanni Ruffini, Alexandros Tsakos, Kerstin Weber-Thum, and Petra Weschenfelder, eds., *The Old Nubian Texts from Attiri* (Earth: Punctum Books, 2016), 15–20, 31–56.
- 21 The interest of at least the two last ones lies with the hypothesis that they belong to a genre that is a Coptic literary creation and therefore it could be assumed that their Old Nubian versions were translated upon Coptic *Vorlagen*. Although this seems probable for the Old Nubian Stauros Text, it is intriguing to think that the Investiture fragment in Old Nubian found at Qasr Ibrim is in fact translated from Greek, since at Serra East there was found a fragment preserving the exact same passage from this work in Greek, which is otherwise both unattested and unexpected in Coptic literacy.
- 22 For Qasr Ibrim, see Joost Hagen, "'A City That Is Set on an Hill Cannot Be Hid': Progress Report on the Coptic Manuscripts from Qasr Ibrim," in *Between the Cataracts: Proceedings of the 11th Conference for Nubian Studies, Warsaw University, 27 August–2 September 2006*, eds. W. Godlewski and A. Łajtar (Warsaw: Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology, 2010), 11.2, 719–26. For Gebel Adda, see Adam Łajtar, "A Survey of Christian Textual Finds from Gebel Adda in the Collections of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto," in *The Fourth Cataract and Beyond. Proceedings of the 12th International Conference for Nubian Studies*, eds. Julie R. Anderson and D.A. Welsby (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 951–59, pls. 1–15.

1. Two double paper leaves discovered at the site of Qasr Ibrim containing fragments of *In quattuor animalia* attributed pseudo-epigraphically to Cyril of Jerusalem (DBMNT 1013);
2. Three parchment fragments from Qasr Ibrim containing a part of the pseudo-Chrysostomian homily *In Raphaellem Archangelum* (DBMNT 1008);
3. Two parchment fragments found in the northeastern room of a three-floor house at Serra East containing fragments of a pseudo-Chrysostomian sermon *In quattuor animalia* (DBMNT 1390).
4. 24 parchment pages, arranged in two quires of three double leaves, with a single leaf separating the two, which contains an Old Nubian translation of *In venerabilem crucem sermo*, attributed pseudo-epigraphically to John Chrysostom (DBMNT 1385).

As is obvious from this short list, the role of Chrysostom for Nubian religious literacy cannot be overestimated. To date the *Corpus Chrysostomicum Nubianum*, apart from the Old Nubian works mentioned above, also includes the following manuscript fragments in Greek and Coptic:

1. An almost complete Greek parchment leaf reconstructed from three fragments found on Sur Island and preserving the second Homily on Penitence (CPG 4333.2).²³
2. Six Greek fragments of a leaf of the same codex from Sur from the second homily on the Title of the 50th Psalm (CPG 4544).²⁴
3. One Greek fragment of the homily *In Saltationem Herodiadis* (CPG 4578), also from Sur Island, but from a different codex.²⁵
4. A partially preserved codex in Greek from Faras with the homilies *In annuntiationem beatae virginis* and *In Christi natalem diem*.²⁶
5. Two unpublished Sahidic Coptic fragments of the pseudo-Chrysostomian homily *In quattuor animalia* from Qasr Ibrim identified by Joost Hagen.

23 Alexandros Tsakos, *The Greek Manuscripts on Parchment Discovered at site SR022.A in the Fourth Cataract Region, North Sudan*, PhD Thesis, Humboldt University of Berlin, 2013; Claudia Näser and Alexandros Tsakos, "From Bits and Pieces: A Corpus of Medieval Manuscripts from the Humboldt University (H.U.N.E.) Concession in the Fourth Nile Cataract," in *The Fourth Cataract and Beyond. Proceedings of the 12th International Conference for Nubian Studies*, eds. Julie R. Anderson and D.A. Welsby (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 977–84, figs. 1–2, pls. 1–9.

24 Tsakos, *The Greek Manuscripts on Parchment Discovered at site SR022.A in the Fourth Cataract Region, North Sudan*.

25 Ibid.

26 Unpublished, to be published in collaboration by Adam Łajtar and Alexandros Tsakos.

6. One unpublished Sahidic Coptic fragment of *In quattuor animalia* from Qasr el-Wizz identified by Alexandros Tsakos.

Further evidence of Patristic literature from Nubia is preserved in Coptic. These literary works have been assigned to authors whose writings are attested in Nubia through single examples: Acacius of Caesarea (DBMNT 2453: Martyrdom of St. Kyriakos and Iulitta), Pisentios of Koptos (DBMNT 1741), and Stephen of Hnes (DBMNT 1742: Homily on the Archangel Michael) from Qasr Ibrim; Shenoute and Stephen of Thebes from Qasr el Wizz. Only Cyril of Jerusalem is honored with more than one witnesses in the corpus of manuscripts from Nubia. Apart from the above-mentioned *In quattuor animalia*, to this author is also attributed the Sahidic Coptic *Sermon on the Cross*, which was again deposited at Serra. Finally, a fragment of the same work has been identified among the manuscripts that have been found at the monastery of Qasr el Wizz.²⁷

As far as the content of these works is concerned, two themes stand out as the most popular: the cult of the Angels and other angelic and celestial beings (e.g. Michael, Raphael, the Four Creatures of the Apocalypse); and the cult of the Holy Cross. It is time to turn in more detail to the pseudo-Chrysostomian “Sermon on the Venerable Cross” discovered at Serra East.

4 Pseudo-Chrysostom's *In venerabilem crucem sermo*

4.1 *The Old Nubian Witness (sc)*

The Old Nubian witness of the *In venerabilem crucem sermo* (DBMNT 1385) has been edited by Gerald M. Browne and is commonly known under the *siglum* sc.²⁸ Browne also published a large number of comments and corrigenda on his edition,²⁹ and it seems that he continued to work on the text throughout his

27 Alexandros Tsakos, “Textual Finds,” in *Excavations at Qasr el-Wizz*, George T. Scanlon, Director. With Contributions by Katarzyna Danys-Lasek, Artur Obłuski, Alexandros Tsakos, and Dobrochna Zielińska, ed. Artur Obłuski (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, forthcoming).

28 Browne, *Chrysostomus Nubianus*.

29 Gerald M. Browne, “Ad Chrysostomum Nubianum,” *Sudan Texts Bulletin* 5 (1983): 2–4; Gerald M. Browne, “Notes on Old Nubian Texts (I–III),” *Sudan Texts Bulletin* 6 (1984): 26–36, at 26–30; Gerald M. Browne, “Notes on Old Nubian Texts (IV–V),” *Sudan Texts Bulletin* 7 (1985): 1–5, at 1–2; Gerald M. Browne, “New Light on Old Nubian: The Serra East Codex,” in *Nubische Studien. Tagungsakten der 5. internationalen Konferenz der International Society for Nubian Studies, Heidelberg, 22.–25. September 1982*, ed. M. Krause (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1986), 219–22; Gerald M. Browne, “Ad Chrysostomum Nubianum,” *Orientalia* 57 (1988):

career.³⁰ The final edition can be found in a handwritten collection completed before his untimely death.³¹

4.1.1 Provenance

SC is a small codex discovered in the winter of 1963–4 by the Oriental Institute of Chicago Nubian Expedition at Serra East in Lower Nubia, in Sudan. It was unearthed from a small pit in sand between the foundations of a house right outside the Middle-Kingdom enclosure wall within which the town of Serra East was built. Therefore, it is often called the “Serra East codex.”

The fact that this codex was a scribal product destined for Serra East is confirmed by its colophon where it is stated that it was “placed upon the cross resting in the Jesus (church) at Serra East” (SC 25.6–8). Therefore, it is very probable that the codex was moved from a church of the town of Serra at some point in time after its original deposition there and was buried below a private house at the same site. Whether this house was related to family of the donors (SC 25.3–6) or whether this choice was guided by other intentions, seems impossible to establish. In any case, SC was deemed as an object that needed special treatment, and can thus be assumed to have had a high material and symbolic value for at least some members of the Christian community at Serra East.

As for its original center of production, some more comments are at place. First, it should be stressed that the handwriting of the colophon is very different from that of the main text, and that their difference is significant enough to allow the suggestion that there were two scribes at work, even though it should be remarked that the two pages of the colophon have been numbered in the hand of the scribe of the main text. Then, it is very important that the scribe of the colophon appears to sign off his short text with a name in Arabic letters, something that has not been noticed in any of the other Old

210–11; Gerald M. Browne, “Notes on Old Nubian Texts (x),” *Beiträge zur Sudanforschung* 5 (1992): 31–37, at 32; Gerald M. Browne, “Miscellanea Nubiana (11),” *Orientalia* 64 (1995): 450–59, at 456–57; Gerald M. Browne, “Ps.-Chrysostom, *In venerabilem crucem sermo*: The Greek Vorlage of the Old Nubian Version,” *Beiträge zur Sudanforschung* 6 (1996): 5–13; Gerald M. Browne, “Miscellanea Nubiana (111),” *Orientalia* 67 (1988): 115–18, at 117; Gerald M. Browne, *Old Nubian Textual Criticism* (Vienna: Verein der Förderer der Sudanforschung, 1998), 7–12, 27.

30 See for example his work on the Syriac version of CPG 4525, in Gerald M. Browne, “Ps.-Chrysostom, *In Venerabilem Crucem Sermo*: The Syriac Version,” *Le Muséon* 99.1–2 (1986): 39–59 and Gerald M. Browne, “Ps.-Chrysostom, *In Venerabilem Crucem Sermo*: The Greek Vorlage of the Syriac Version,” *Le Muséon* 103.1–2 (1990): 125–38.

31 Gerald M. Browne, *Old Nubian Literary Texts*, unpublished manuscript, 2004.

Nubian documents.³² We are therefore inclined to suggest that the production of this colophon took place in an environment where someone with an Arabic name would have been able to compose a text in Old Nubian. The most plausible guess would thus be Upper Egypt, to which several manuscripts related to Nubian literacy have been assigned. Finally, it should be noted that, if the above suggestion is correct, it would be rather implausible that the manuscript was first produced in Lower Nubia and then transported to Upper Egypt to receive its colophon. The most economic alternative would have been that the donors ordered the manuscript at a scriptorium in Upper Egypt where a scribe added the colophon after the original work was finished and before the codex was moved to Nubia to be deposited at the church of Jesus in Serra East.

4.1.2 Dating

In his various commentaries Browne dates SC to the eleventh or twelfth century on the basis of paleographic similarities of the handwriting in the colophon with a Nubian leather scroll from 1155 CE (DBMNT 581),³³ and of the main hand with the system of supralineation appearing in Coptic manuscripts of that same period.³⁴

These paleographical comments are not inconsistent with the major decorations in SC, namely the use of red ink for the *incipit* and its marginal note, certain religious names and words, certain punctuation signs, and the almost diagnostic for religious manuscripts from Christian Nubia, the touching with red ink of the lobes of the letter *phi*. The introduction of this tradition to Nubia has been dated to the turn from the first to the second millennium CE.³⁵

While this datation may well be correct and fortuitously coincide with the blossoming of Medieval Nubian literacy,³⁶ we believe to have found evidence that SC is a copy from an earlier manuscript that was translated from Greek without the intercession of a third language such as Coptic or Syriac. In order to substantiate our findings, we will begin our investigation with the manuscript

32 The only exception is a single line of Arabic inserted after the name of the recipient in the letter DBMNT 2829.

33 Browne, "New Light on Old Nubian," 219.

34 Gerald M. Browne, "Notes on Old Nubian VIII," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 18 (1981): 55–61, esp. 59.

35 Alexandros Tsakos, "A Palaeographic Detail from Nubian Manuscripts: The Decoration of the Lobes of the Letter 'Φ' with Red Ink," in *Greece, Rome, Byzantium and Africa: Studies Presented to Benjamin Hendrickx on His Seventy-fifth Birthday*, eds. W. Henderson and E. Zacharopoulou (Athens: Hērodotos, 2016), 639–52.

36 For a more conservative opinion, see Ruffini, *The Bishop, the Eparch and the King*, 46.

witnesses in Greek and other languages, and then turn to the analysis of the methods of translation from the *Vorlage* into Old Nubian.

4.2 *Non-Greek Witnesses*

The popularity of the *In venerabilem crucem sermo* is testified by the existence of translations in no less than six languages. Apart from the Old Nubian one, there have been identified translations in Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Old Russian, and Arabic.³⁷ Browne has collated three Syriac manuscripts and two Latin ones. In our work, we have followed from closely the variants exhibited in Browne's collations with the Syriac and Latin traditions, but have also worked independently and in more detail with the sixth-seventh-century Latin manuscript Parisinus NAL 1599 (the same as the one used by Browne, henceforth L). The result of the comparison with this Latin witness seems to us very significant for the dating of the autograph for the Nubian version of CPG 4525, as it will be shown in § 5.3.

4.3 *Greek Witnesses*

The identification of the Greek manuscript witnesses of any given Patristic work has been helped tremendously in recent years by online tools like the TLG and Pinakes.³⁸ From the latter, one can glean more than 50 different manuscripts.³⁹ However, in the frame of a study like the present one, not all of them can be examined in closer detail. We have opted for the most economic solution, namely to examine most of the manuscripts that are available online. These were the following, in chronological order (marked with a star are the witnesses already collated by Browne, maintaining the same siglum):

- S = 8th–9th c.: Sinai 493, ff. 59^v–77^{*}
- C = 10th c.: Oxford, Baroccianus 55, ff. 309–315^{*}
- Ang = 12th c.: Roma, Angelicus 46, ff. 99^v–105
- P1 = 12th c.: Parisinus 1176, ff. 25^v–28^v
- P2 = 12th c.: Parisinus 1196, ff. 171–175^v
- P3 = 14th c.: Parisinus suppl. 1012, 45^v–49^v
- V1 = 14th c.: Vaticanus Barberinus 583, ff. 152–157
- V2 = 14th c.: Vaticanus Ottobonianus 264, ff. 68^v–73
- P4 = 15th c.: Parisinus 1021, ff. 326^v–333

37 Browne, "The Syriac Version," 39 (with references).

38 About the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, see: <http://www.tlg.uci.edu/about/history.php> and about the Pinakes database, see: <http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/>.

39 For the complete list, see: <http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/notices/oeuvre/8726/>.

- BL = 16th c.: British Library Add. 21983, ff. 239^v–243
- BSB = 16th c.: München, BSB Gr. 271, ff. 105–106^v

The collation of these manuscripts confirmed the idea expressed by Browne that S provides the closest parallel to the Nubian text among the witnesses in the Greek language.⁴⁰ Closest to S are P₃ and BL.

Furthermore, we can identify other interesting groups among the examined witnesses: C is very close to P₂, while P₁ is in the same group with Ang, V₁ and V₂. From these two groups, the former exhibits more similarities with the Nubian version than the latter, as it will be seen from the analysis that follows.

P₄ and BSB stand quite apart from the rest of the witnesses, each representing very different traditions. The scribe of the former has created a very shortened version of CPG 4525, while the scribe of the latter has attempted to normalize the language, although in certain instances he seems to have followed manuscript traditions that were unknown to the rest of the scribes, but that the Nubian translator might have seen in the *Vorlage* he used for the creation of the Nubian version of CPG 4525. BSB has moreover an interesting scribal history, and therefore it deserves special treatment in the next section.

4.3.1 The Curious Case of BSB

Among the Greek manuscripts collated for this study, there is a manuscript dated to the sixteenth century and kept in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek with call number gr. 0271 (BSB), which preserves in at least three instances the only witness for some particularities exhibited by the text of the Serra East codex. Moreover, this manuscript is the only witness we were able to find that follows the extensive doxology in SC 24.9–16. All other witnesses have truncated versions.

In the Pinakes database, the scribe of this text is identified as Andreas Darmarius from Monemvasia. More than 200 manuscripts are assigned to him as copyist, while he appears as the owner of 36 more.⁴¹ His activity can be traced between the years 1560 and 1587, mainly in Italy (esp. Venice) and in Spain (esp. Madrid).⁴² The manuscript in Munich seems to belong to a collection purchased by Louis, Duke of Württemberg, in August or September 1584.⁴³ It is plausible that, working in the large collections of Venice or Madrid, Darmarius came across a manuscript that was closer to the now lost *Vorlage* of the Nubian

⁴⁰ Cf. Browne, *Chrysostomus Nubianus*, 22 and note 6 and Browne, “The Syriac Version,” 39.

⁴¹ <http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/notices/copiste-possesseur-autre/847/>.

⁴² Ludwig Schmidt, “Andreas Darmarius: Ein Beitrag zur Handschriftenkunde des 16. Jahrhunderts,” *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 3 (1886): 126–36.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 133.

witness of CPG 4525. There are in fact two manuscripts from the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice (Gr. Z. 363 [coll. 0818], mid-eleventh century and Gr. VII. 033 [coll. 1367], fifteenth century), one from the Archivo y Biblioteca Capitular in Toledo (Fonds principal 009–20, sixteenth century), and one from the Real Biblioteca in Madrid (Ω.III.10, Andrés 543, fourteenth-fifteenth century) that preserve these works that Darmarius may have consulted. Browne had collated one of the Venetian witnesses,⁴⁴ but unfortunately, by the time this chapter needed to be submitted, the authors had not been able to consult the remaining three.

Finally, it should be mentioned that another scribe's hand is recognized in the texts contained in BSB, namely that of Maximos Margunios. He was active in Venice and has contributed greatly to Saville's edition of the Chrysostomian corpus.⁴⁵ Perhaps then, it is among the works in Venice that Darmarius saw the *Vorlage* of the Nubian version of CPG 4525, which must have been of great antiquity.⁴⁶

4.4 *The Content of CPG 4525*

In order to appreciate the analysis that follows, a brief overview of the content of the homily, as it appears in the Nubian version, is at place. After the incipit to the work, where we learn that this is a praise of the glorious Cross by John Chrysostom, we hear the preacher attempting to attract the attention of his beloved audience with a series of open questions juxtaposing pairs of identities on three levels: "What shall I call you? Are you sheep and not shepherds? Are you boatmen and not leaders? Are you learners and not teachers?" The speaker

44 Browne, "The Greek Vorlage of the Syriac Version," 125.

45 <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Maximus-Margunios>.

46 Cf. the comments by Mark Pattison, *Isaac Casaubon 1559–1614* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1970), 35–36: "Darmarius was one of the last of the calligraphs, a race who long survived the invention of printing. Darmarius—'home graecus,' says Casaubon, with a tinge of bitterness at the recollection of some of his bargains—had, it should seem, access to the library at Venice, and went about Europe to sell his copies. His transcripts are no 'livres de luxe,' like the productions of the pen of a Vergicio or a Rhosus—true works of art, made to adorn the collections of princes and cardinals. Darmarius' books are hasty transcripts, on poor paper, of any inedita he could get hold of in Bessarion's library. Casaubon may naturally have preferred, with S. Jerome, correct books to ornamental books, but this he did not get from Darmarius. The transcripts of Darmarius do not make up for their want of external beauty by accuracy of text; for the transcriber does not seem to have known even the grammar of classical greek. For these wretched copies he was able to extract sums really vast. For the Polyænus Casaubon had given a great sum—'magno ære.' A Julius Africanus was sold to him, by the same vendor, for 300 crowns, 'almost its weight in silver.' But Polyænus and Africanus were not then in print, and Casaubon must have them."

identifies the members of his audience with both roles of each pair, and therefore it is difficult to address them in order to speak about what his sermon will deal with. Moreover, he seems to consider them at the same time as his peers and equals.

In order to stress his wish to have their attention, the preacher uses a metaphor inspired from the sensual experience of a table set for his audience—a spiritual table that is. His discourse will begin by explaining the metaphor of the boatmen and their leader, in the frame of which his audience assumes actually neither of the two roles! The boat is the Holy Scripture, the steering pole is the Cross, the leader is Christ, the governor the Father, and the wind the Holy Spirit. As for his audience, they are actually divers for pearls, and these pearls are of course the contents of the sermon itself (and the main course on the spiritual table).

So, once more the audience is called to be attentive to the preacher's words, but again he does not say his mind. Rather, he again invites his audience to make the necessary effort to apprehend the treasures that he is going to reveal. This time the call is based on a Biblical citation (Matt. 7:6) and a metaphor inspired from agricultural life: the farmer needs to work hard before sowing the seed, and then wait a whole year for the harvest to be collected in the granaries. By contrast, the homilist sows and harvests in a single day, the day of his preaching, provided that he speaks to ears that listen.

Finally, after three more citations related to the eager attentiveness of a faithful audience (i.e., Eccles. 25:9, Wisd. of Sol. 2:24 and John 8:51), he discloses the purpose of his sermon: "I want to propose a discourse about what the **** is God."⁴⁷ We have reached page 7, that is one third of the entire work, in order to find out the topic of the sermon, and interestingly it is not what was announced by the scribe in the *incipit*, namely a praise on the glorious Cross—or at least not yet. In any case, God is described as a man who sits on a mountain and sees boats on the sea, some arriving at a safe haven, some guided through the waves, some sinking. It seems that there is a reference to the earlier metaphor of sea, especially since some phrases are repeated, but the preacher leaves this topic behind and rather takes a further step in his argumentation and apophatically tries to define God: Because God is not really sitting on any heights, since he is limitless, boundless, deathless, etc., these attributes can be learnt, but are acquired knowledge for the faithful. He supports his position by citing John 17:3 ("And this is eternal life, to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent"), and thus imperceptibly he moves the attention to Christ.

47 For an analysis of the expletive "****," see below § 6.1.

Once more, the preacher begins his attempt to define Christ by using an apophatic argument. For he calls his audience not to think of the Christ as only God, but as the union of the human and the divine. This very important Christological positioning is followed by an entire page of contrasting aphorisms (e.g., he died—he resurrected the dead), introduced by the verbal form “we know,” reminding us of the phrases in a creed of faith. In fact, some of these phrases are part of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, such as “was born by Mary,” while some others, such as the reference to Pilate, are used in a variant of the Creed found in Nubia and called *Symbolum Dongolanum*.⁴⁸

After this Credo-like section, the preacher calls upon his audience to praise Jesus, and strengthens his praise by two more biblical citations (Matt. 16:18 and 1 Cor. 3:11). Unexpectedly, the next call is to his brothers—a new way to address his audience—, who should attend to each other with gentleness, helping to avoid earthly sins so as to also avoid punishment in the afterlife.

What follows is an explanation that sin and punishment were not created for our destruction, but so that we do not remain idle. “For if God wanted us dead, why would he send his Son to die for us?,” the preacher wonders. Then follows a list of all the things Jesus did on earth in order that humans partake of the divine nature. Greatest of all these things was of course Christ’s crucifixion. And finally, through this realization, we arrive at what had been named in the *incipit* as the praise of the Cross: a list of 50 short sentences of the form “The Cross is the x of the y,” beginning with “The Cross is the hope of the Christians,” and ending with “The Cross is clothing of the naked.”

This last phrase allows the speaker to open a new chapter, again by using an apophatic argument: “It is not nakedness of body, but faithlessness that is meant.” And he explains by citing Paul (Gal. 3:27) that faithlessness is nakedness because the baptized are dressed in Christ. The mentioning of Christ’s name brings back a repetition of why Christ is both God and human, culminating in the very representative for such thinking prologue to the Gospel of John. The reason for this Christological repetition confirms the impression that the preacher is talking to equals. He repeats so that all who listen will become teachers. As for the citation of John 1:1, it allows for the description of the entire creation, from the universe and its powers, through the natural environment and the animals, to the humans, as an act of Jesus.

And when the narration arrives at the first humans, we follow them into Paradise and to the primal sin, caused by the jealousy of Devil. Here, the homily

48 Stefan Jakobielski and Adam Łajtar, “Ein Glaubensbekenntnis aus Alt Dongola (Sudan),” *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 27 (1997): 7–26.

closely follows the text of Genesis, with the single goal to arrive—albeit in rather convoluted rhetorics—at the conclusion that as the first sin occurred through the wood of the forbidden tree, so did the salvation take place through the wood of the Cross. There follows a doxology, and SC is concluded with a lengthy colophon written in a different hand, as addressed above.

5 The Old Nubian Translation of CPG 4525 (SC)

Before treating several aspects of this particular translation, we will provide evidence that SC is indeed a translation from Greek without the intercession of third language (§ 5.1), and that the manuscript found in Serra East is a copy of the original translation (§ 5.2). This, in turn, implies that if the date *post quem* of the Serra East codex is ~1000 CE, the production date of the original translation needs to be broadly situated between the first intrusions of Christianity in the Nubian realm and the production date of the Serra East codex.

It is worthwhile mentioning that the Old Nubian translation of the “Sermon on the Venerable Cross” is markedly different from other translations such as the Greek–Old Nubian bilingual psalms found in Qasr Ibrim and (DBMNT 1002, 1003, 1009, 1010, 1292) and Dongola (DBMNT 1388). Whereas the psalms showcase a translation technique that pushes Old Nubian very close to the grammatical structures of Greek,⁴⁹ SC seems in general to more closely adhere to the native Old Nubian SOV structure.⁵⁰

5.1 *SC is a Translation from Greek*

To establish that SC represents a translation from Greek, we will need to ascertain that particular aspects of the translation could only have occurred in a translation process from a Greek manuscript. We will propose that this is indeed the case, based on the colometry found in S, misspellings of vowels in S and BSB that are reflected by “erroneous” translations in SC, and certain vocabulary choices.

In the passages SC 1.14–2.6 and 2.9–17 the Old Nubian manuscript exhibits a colometry and syntax that appears to be at odds with the majority of Greek witnesses, which break up the phrase before ἐστὲ “you are” rather than after it,

49 See for an extensive overview of Old Nubian translation techniques Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei and Alexandros Tsakos, *The Translation of Christian Literature in Medieval Nubia* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publishers, in preparation).

50 Cf. Gerald M. Browne, *Old Nubian Grammar* (Munich: Lincom, 2002), 2.

in the following manner: Πρόβατα ὑμᾶς καλέσω; Καί γάρ ἐστέ πραεῖς καὶ ἡσύχιοι. Ποιμένας ὑμᾶς καλέσω; Καί γάρ ἐστέ τῇ πίρα τὸν κλύδωνα ὑπομένοντας (Ang, f. 99^v–100).

- (1) SC 1.14–17 ΤΙΚΑΝΕ[ΓΟ]ΥΕΜΑ· ὀκιδόκε[ι] ὃ εἴναλ[κε·] Τ[Ο]ΥΑ[Λ]ΛΑΖΗ ΕΥΘ-
 ΔΕ[ΔΡΑΔ]ΚΕ· ΚΟΡ[Ο]Ε[ΓΟ]ΥΕΜΑ· ὀκιδόκ[ΟΕΙΟ]ΕΙΟΝ Εἴναλκε·
tikan-e-goue-ma ok-ij-ko-ei-o
 sheep-PL.PRED-PL.PRED-PRED-AFF call-PLACT-SUBORD-1SG-LOC
ein-n-a-lke touall-a-sin
 be-PRS-PRED-AFF.PRS.2PL gentle-PRED-EMP
eu-j-aj-ar-a-ske
 pasture-PLACT-INCH-PST1-PRED-AFF.PST.2PL
koros-e-goue-ma ok-ij-ko-ei-o-eion
 shepherd-PL.PRED-PL.PRED-AFF call-PLACT-SUBORD-1SG-LOC-TOP
ein-n-a-lke
 be-PRS-PRED-AFF.PRS.2PL
 “If I call you sheep, you are; you have been gentle and have pastured. And
 if I call you shepherds, you are;”⁵¹

In example (1) we follow Browne in reconstructing a colon after the first affirmative verb form Εἴναλ[κε·] based on its second occurrence. The verb form also clearly indicates that this is the end of the phrase, as it is often used in the apodosis of a conditional clause construction. The only manuscript that has a colon at the same point is S, namely: Πρόβατα ὑμᾶς καλέσω; Καί γάρ ἐσταί (f. 58^r).

Further evidence is that both the Old Nubian text and S omit part of the text in this sequence. S omits the sentence following the first ἐσταί (“you have been gentle and have pastured”), whereas SC omits the sentence following the second Εἴναλ[κε·] (“for you have patiently experienced the tumults of winter”). The placement of the colon in Greek after ἐσταί thus leads the Nubian translator to parse the Greek sentence differently, arriving at a rendering that is at odds with the Greek mss.: πρόβατα ὑμᾶς καλέσω; καὶ γάρ ἐστε πραεῖς καὶ ἡσύχιοι.

51 The following abbreviations are used in the glosses: 1—first person; 2—second person; 3—third person; ACC—accusative; AFF—affirmative; ALL—allative; COMP—comparative; DAT—dative; DET—determiner; EMP—emphatic marker; GEN—genitive; HAB—habitual; INCH—inchoative; INT—intensive; INTEN—intentional; INTER—interrogative; LOC—locative; NMLZ—nominalizer; PFV—perfective; PL—plural; PLACT—pluractional; PRED—predicate marker; PRS—present; PST—past; PST1—past 1; QUOT—quotation; SG—singular; SUBORD—subordinate; SUPE—superessive; TOP—topic marker; TR—transitive.

Ποιμένας ὑμᾶς καλέσω; καὶ γὰρ ἐστε ... “Shall I call you sheep? Because you are mild and and quiet. Shall I call you shepherds? Because you are ...”

It should further be noted that the confusion in the spelling of the final vowel in S, ἐσταί for ἐστέ, seems to be the reason for another particularity of the translation on folio 7:

- (2) SC 7.5–7 ΕΘΔΟΥ ἸΗΣΟΥCΝ ΟΥΔ[Γ]ΓΕΛΛΑ ΜΑΘΗΤΙCΙΟΥΓΙΛΛΕ Π[ΕC]ΡΑCΝ·
 ᾧΓΕΝΔΔ[ΛΚ]Ε ΟΥΡΟΥΓΔ [1–2]· ἈΝ CΑΛΓΟΥΚΑ ΕΙ[Δ]ΨΙΘΕΝ·
ηodou iēsou-Ø-sin ouaggel-la mathētis-igou-gille
 lord Jesus-NOM-EMP gospel-DAT disciple-PL-ALL
pes-r-a-sin agend-a-lke ourou-a ... an
 speak-PRS-PRED-EMP blessed-PRED-AFF.PRS.2PL 2PL-?? 1SG.GEN
sal-gou-ka eidñ-ij-en
 word-PL-ACC keep-PLACT-PFV.PRS.2/3SG
 “For Lord Jesus says in the Gospel to the disciples: ‘Blessed are you, if
 you/he listen(s) to my words.’”

In this phrase, S writes τηρήσεται instead of τηρήσετε, i.e. *alpha-iota* for *epsilon* in the final syllable, thus making it look like a third person singular verb instead of a second person plural. The Nubian translator obviously copies from a manuscript with a similar orthography and subsequently renders this in Old Nubian with 2nd/3rd person singular verb form ΕΙ[Δ]ΨΙΘΕΝ, which is no longer congruent with the 2nd person plural pronoun ΟΥΡΟΥ, but does match the way in which this sentence actually appears in John 8:51: ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐάν τις τὸν ἐμὸν λόγον τηρήσῃ.

Another, more dramatic example of the confusion of Greek vowels is on folio 3:

- (3) SC 3.12–13 CΑΛΑΠΠΑ CΕΡΓΑΡΙ ΚΟΝΚΙΝΑ ΜῆΝΑCΝ·
sal-Ø-appa seuarti kon-k-in-a
 word-NOM-for spirit have-HAB-PRS.2/3SG-PRED
min-n-a-sin
 not.be-PRS.2/3SG-PRED-EMP
 “For the word is not spiritual.”

All manuscripts we have inspected have here λόγος γὰρ ἐστὶ πνευματικός “For the word is spiritual.” However, the negation in Old Nubian ΜῆΝΑCΝ cannot be dismissed as a simple translation error, because BSB shows the possible source of the confusion. The scribe has added a dative of the 1st person singular personal pronoun in that sentence, namely λόγος γὰρ μοι ἐστί, which may have been mis-

read as the homophonous $\mu\etá$,⁵² resulting in the Old Nubian negative copula $\text{m}\ddot{\text{u}}\text{n}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{s}\ddot{\text{c}}\ddot{\text{n}}$: This mistake provides good evidence for a translation from Greek to Old Nubian.

Other, less dramatic errors provide additional evidence. In SC 1.7 and 2.18, the translator interprets the Greek aorist subjunctive $\lambda\alpha\lambda\eta\sigma\omega$ (Τί εἶπω καὶ τί λαλήσω;) as a future indicative, translating it with the Old Nubian intentional present tense form $\pi\epsilon\varsigma\alpha\rho\rho\epsilon$ “I will.”

Also in particular vocabulary choices we can see the influence of the Greek prototype. With SC 2.4 and 7.19 ΤΡΙΤΗ ΤΟΥΚ-, we find a calque of Greek τρικύμα “triple wave.” For the Greek ἀνάστασις “resurrection” we find SC 10.10, 14.15 ἈΝΩΤ-, a possible loanword deriving from the Greek. Although Browne doesn’t flag this noun as a Greek loanword,⁵³ its phonological structure appears to be non-Nubian. In other texts, ἀνάστασις is usually rendered with the native word ɢäïɛɾΔεɾ *vel sim.*, for example in DBMNT 391 (St.) 4.4 which is a parallel to SC 14.15. It is noteworthy that the only other occurrence of ἈΝΩ(1)Τ- is in P.Q1 10.A.ii.17, the pseudo-Chrysostomian homily *In Raphaellem Archangelum*. It remains to be investigated whether this translation could have possibly been produced by the same scribe or within the same scriptorium.⁵⁴

5.2 *sc is a Copy of an Earlier Manuscript*

The fact that SC may indeed be a copy of an earlier manuscript is shown by a number of scribal errors that cannot be explained as translation errors, but are the result of erroneous readings of the copyist.

For SC 4.13–15 ΟΓΛΛΑΚΚΕΛΓΟΥΝ ΟΥΕΞΚΤΕΙΝΗΝΟΝ ΚΟΥΛΛΟΥΡΓΟΥΚΑ “instead of teachers learners,” all other witnesses (except for P2, V1, and V2, which omit the phrase) have ναυτῶν “sailors” instead of ΟΓΛΛΑΚΚΕΛΓΟΥΝ “teachers” (e.g. P3, f. 46: ἀντί ναυτῶν τοὺς μαθητάς).⁵⁵ The error can be explained by the scribe’s eye catching the same word on SC 4.22 ΟΓΛΟΥΚΚΑΝ[εκ, and the fact that ΚΟΥΛΛΟΥΡΓΟΥΚΑ “learners” has been previously already paired with it in SC 1.10–12 and 2.22–3.1.

SC 5.4–5 εἰαP[τα] κεCñ κελλω “as it has been known” translates a phrase that in all other manuscripts appears as γέγραπται γάρ “for it has been written.”⁵⁶

52 Cf. Geoffrey Horrocks, *Greek: A History of the Language and Its Speakers*, 2nd edn. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 165–70.

53 Gerald M. Browne, *Old Nubian Dictionary* (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), 11.

54 Another curious parallel is that the epithet $\sigma\kappa\lambda\iota\tau\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\kappa\lambda$ “holiest” appears elsewhere in P.Q1 2 16.ii.1 $\epsilon\tau\epsilon\kappa\epsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\kappa\lambda$, Cyril of Jerusalem’s *In quattuor animalia*.

55 Cf. Browne, *Chrysostomus Nubianus*, 87.

56 Cf. Ibid., 88.

It seems unlikely that the erroneous translation is the result of an error in the Greek original. Rather, the Old Nubian $\epsilon\iota\alpha\rho[\tau\alpha]\kappa\epsilon\epsilon\tilde{n}$ differs only one phoneme from $\pi\alpha\rho\tau\alpha\kappa\epsilon\epsilon\tilde{n}$ “it has been written,” and can therefore easily be explained as a scribal error. Another mistake with an initial letter is in SC 14.17, where we read the (meaningless) $\Delta\omicron\Upsilon\epsilon\tilde{\tau}\tau\rho\iota\omicron\Upsilon\omicron\Upsilon\tilde{n}$ instead of the correct $\Delta\omicron\Upsilon\epsilon\tilde{\tau}\tau\rho\iota\omicron\Upsilon\omicron\Upsilon\tilde{n}$ “of the blind.” Here the scribe must have confused the two similar letter forms.⁵⁷

In SC 8.3 all other witnesses have $\delta\psi\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$ “evening” instead of $\tau\tilde{\iota}\tau\tilde{\iota}\lambda$ “the wave.” The error can be explained by the fact that $\Delta\iota\tau\tilde{\iota}\lambda$ “the evening” sounded very similar to $\tau\tilde{\iota}\tau\tilde{\iota}\lambda$, and the latter word had already appeared several times earlier in the text, in SC 2.4, and just before in 7.19.⁵⁸

At SC 10.16, the scribe inserts an additional $\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\mu\omicron$ “we know” even though the Credo-like section has already finished. Perhaps he thought there was still another phrase to be copied. None of the other witnesses contain this mistake.⁵⁹

And finally, we find a mistake caused by a homoioteleuton in SC 24.13–14, where the scribe wrote $\pi\iota\tau\tau\tilde{\iota}\tau\omicron\Upsilon\ \epsilon\tilde{\zeta}\epsilon\lambda\Delta\epsilon\langle\ldots\rangle\kappa\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omega$ “holy baptism and ...” where Greek has $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\omicron\upsilon\ \beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\ \tau\eta\varsigma\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\acute{\eta}\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma$. The scribe must have jumped from the first conjunction $-\Delta\epsilon$ directly to the second $-(\Delta\epsilon)\kappa\epsilon\lambda\lambda\omega$, skipping over the second part of the coordinated pair.

5.3 *Dating the Autograph*

If our assessment of this text as a copy of an earlier autograph indeed holds, then we should ask ourselves how far back in time the supposed autograph was produced based on a Greek *Vorlage*. As argued above, if the production date of the Serra East codex is to be situated roughly between 1000–1200 CE, the production date of the original translation from Greek can be anywhere from the evangelization of Nubia in the sixth century up to that period.

We have found so far several indications that the Old Nubian translation preserves a number of features that are shared with the earliest witness in Greek, namely S. Further translation errors can be explained by reference to features of this and the second oldest witness, the seventh-eighth-century Latin uncial L.

⁵⁷ Cf. Ibid., 114.

⁵⁸ At *ibid.*, 97, Browne suggests that $\tau\tilde{\iota}\tau\tilde{\iota}$ - should be related to Nobiin *dip* and Andaandi *dibir* “evening.” This seems etymologically unlikely, as Old Nubian τ - does not correspond to Nobiin/Andaandi *d*-. Old Nubian $\tau\tilde{\iota}\tau\tilde{\iota}$ - “wave” corresponds to Nobiin *tipid* “wave,” cf. Mokhtar M. Khalil, *Wörterbuch der nubischen Sprache (Fadidja/Mahas-Dialekt)* (Warsaw: Nubica, 1996), 107.

⁵⁹ Cf. Browne, *Chrysostomus Nubianus*, 103.

An example of similarity with S:

- (4) SC 13.5–6 ἀγεῖλλα ἀκίϛνα· ἐκ[κα] χεροῦβειμγοῦλαω οὐγκεν[ιδ·]
auel-la ak-is-n-a eik-ka kheroubeim-gou-l-dō
 boat-DAT sit-PST2-2/3SG-PRED 2SG-ACC cherubim-PL-DET-SUPE
ouskeni-a
 place.TR.SUBORD.SG-PRED
 “He sat on a boat so as to place you above the Cherubim.”

SC 13.5 ἀγεῖλλα translates Greek πλοῖω “boat,” which is only found in S and P₁. All other witnesses change πλοῖω to πῶλω “donkey,” while S and P₁, as well as several other witnesses, also add “in/above the skies.”

There are several other examples in which SC appears to follow the tradition of S, as well as of other members of the same family of texts, i.e., P₃ and BL.

For example, in basically the entirety of folio 21, the parallel of which is lacking in S owing to a missing leaf, SC follows P₃ and BL with only few exceptions. The same is the case for SC 23.11–15 ἡἡνοδοῦν ἡτκα τοῦγα πεσοναδειον· ἐν ὄρλαε ἐν τοῦλαδεκellomon ὄωποπα ὄδνα· ḥkṭ kṭpanna ἐν ḏfen oḡkre ἡḡḡannoḏ. “Why did he curse the serpent and said: ‘On your chest and your belly you will crawl. You will eat earth for all the days of your life?’” which is paralleled by the same group of Greek witnesses, as well as L.

The parallels between SC and L are frequent, and the Parisian manuscript in Latin is in several cases the only other witness to preserve readings present in SC. A spectacular example is SC 6.25–7.1 ἄγεν[α] δαίϛνα οὐλγελοῦν[α] οὐλγα πεσοῦτενηλ κεραῖν “Blessed is he who narrates to the ear of those who listen.” Even though the syntax of this sentence is difficult to analyze, it clearly preserves a citation from Ecclesiasticus 25:9, which has been lost in all Greek and Syriac witnesses, but has been preserved in L, f. 2^v, lines 8–9: *beatus qui loquitur in aures audientium*.

There are several other unique concordances between SC and L:

- In SC 7.5 εοδου ἡκοῦϛν “for Lord Jesus” where only L, f. 2^v, line 12 preserves *d(omi)n(us) ih(e)s(us)*.
- In SC 8.5–7 ὡοειγολλον τοῦττοῦν[α] εἰδῖρκανελοδοῦν λαγου μελλ[ε] οὔσανκα ἀρῖλαδεκκα τοῦκραν· “While some [boats], because of the gust of the winds, leave the path,” the only other manuscript that preserves the version without Greek πλοῖων is L, f. 2^v, line 24.
- In SC 9.3, within an enumeration of qualities of God, the Old Nubian has κḥκḥψ[ικα] “motionless,” with κḥ- possibly deriving from the verb κῖ(ρ) “to come,” is only parallel in L, f. 3^r, line 8, *immobilem*, whereas all the Greek witnesses have ἄυλον “immaterial.”

- In SC 10.14 ΚΤΕΟΔΤΤΑΚΑΡΕΙΝῆ “was stoned,” the only other manuscript preserving the past tense is L, f. 3^r, line 25, *lapidatum*. All Greek witnesses have a present tense or a different verb altogether.
- The meaning of SC 13.13 ΟΥΝΝΙΤΑΚΙCΝΑ “he was born,” is also preserved in L, f. 3bis-r, line 19 and in the Syriac tradition. All the Greek witnesses examined have προῆλθεν “he came from.”
- In SC 15.20 ΓΟΥΕΙᾶ “shield” is found where all other MSS have ὄπλον “weapon.” But L, f. 3bis-v, line 24 preserves *scutum*.
- In SC 19.9 ΔΙΜΗΛΓΟ[Υ]Λ ΠῚΡΑ ΜΟΡΑΝΝΟΝ “and when everything stopped existing” it seems that the Old Nubian translator saw something similar to L, f. 4^v, line 16 *et quicquid illud est quod subsistit*, which is rendered by ΔΙΜΗΛΓΟ[Υ]Λ ΠῚΡΑ. Greek witnesses have καὶ ἔτι τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων περιουσία (with variations), which appears to be significantly different. This is followed by the first word of the next sentence, ἐσχάτως, rendered here with ΜΟΡΑΝΝΟΝ. It appears that as in ex. 1 our translator mistakenly cuts up the sentences.

The two manuscripts under scrutiny here also present a few common omissions:⁶⁰

- Like L, f. 4^v, line 15, SC 19.7–8 excludes “weeks,” in Greek ἑβδομάδας, from the list of things Jesus created.
- Like L, f. 5^r, line 10, SC 21.16 excludes a translation of διὰ τοῦτο or τοῦ ἔνεκεν “because of this” before Τῶλλλον ... νοῖα “God said.”

Although an early witness in Latin may complicate the question as to the language in which this particular pseudo-Chrysostomian text was written, we remain loyal to the traditional opinion in Patristic studies that this homily is a part of the Battle of the Pseudo-Epigrapha taking place if not already during the lifetime of Chrysostom then certainly in the years following his death.⁶¹

It should be stressed that there appears to be also linguistic evidence for the relative earliness of the original translation of SC:

- The attestation of the comparative/superlative morpheme -ΕΝΟΚ (e.g., SC 1.1 ΕῤΕΝΟΚῶ “holiest”), which has all but disappeared in supposedly later texts, and is not mentioned in Browne’s *Old Nubian Grammar*.⁶²

⁶⁰ In these examples we do not take in consideration P4, because, as explained in § 4.3, this witness is a very condensed form of the entire work.

⁶¹ Wendy Mayer, “Media Manipulation as a Tool in Religious Conflict: Controlling the Narrative Surrounding the Deposition of John Chrysostom,” in *Religious Conflict from Early Christianity to the Rise of Islam*, eds. Wendy Mayer, Neil Bronwen, and Albrecht Christian (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 151–68.

⁶² Cf. Browne, *Old Nubian Grammar*, 30, § 3.4.4.1.

- There is the usage of the verb OK “to call” with the affirmative marker -MA (as in ex. 1), and the overall relatively frequent occurrence of the morpheme. Again this particular usage seems to be constrained to SC, with later texts opting for the quotation marker $\text{-\bar{\Delta}}$.⁶³

These observations suggest an earlier production rather than a later one. At the same time, SC does not exhibit any of the characteristics of Old Nubian that we have come to associate with later texts, including the erosion of a number of verbal morphemes. If anything, the morphology in SC seems to be richer than in later texts.

If indeed SC is to be dated relatively early, this also entails that SC 14.6–11 $\epsilon\tilde{\eta}\epsilon\psi\tau[\Delta]\kappa\tilde{\eta}\kappa\text{ON } \epsilon\text{O}\Delta\text{OY } \epsilon\tilde{\eta}\tilde{\eta}\tilde{\lambda} \text{ TAP}\tilde{\text{I}}\tilde{\text{O}}\tilde{\text{O}}\gamma[\eta \epsilon]\psi\text{FITAKM}\tilde{\text{E}}\tilde{\text{N}}\tilde{\text{N}}\tilde{\lambda}[\lambda]\omega \cdot \text{TAP}\tilde{\text{I}}\tilde{\lambda}\text{-}[\text{O}\tilde{\text{O}}]\gamma[\eta]\epsilon\tilde{\eta}\Delta\epsilon \cdot \text{CEYAP}\tilde{\text{T}}[\text{I}] \text{C}\tilde{\text{C}}\text{C}\text{LO}\tilde{\text{O}}[\gamma]\eta\epsilon\tilde{\eta}\Delta\epsilon \cdot \epsilon\tilde{\eta}\tilde{\eta} \text{ KAYE}\tilde{\text{I}}\text{OY}\tilde{\text{N}} \text{DOY}\tilde{\text{P}}\tilde{\text{I}}\tilde{\Delta}\text{ENK}\omega \cdot \tilde{\text{C}}\text{TAYPOC}\tilde{\lambda}[\text{O}]\tilde{\text{O}}\tilde{\omega}\tilde{\Delta}\tilde{\lambda}\omega \text{OIMM}\tilde{\text{I}}\tilde{\Delta}\tilde{\text{E}}\text{ON}\tilde{\lambda} \cdot$ “And if he suffered, our Lord did not suffer because of himself, nor because of his Father, nor because of the Holy Spirit, but for the sake of the first-borns of mankind he became everyone through the cross,” which has no parallel in any of the other manuscript traditions, is a later interpolation into the translation made by a Nubian scribe. As linguistic evidence we may adduce the usage of the conjunction -KON “and” in $\epsilon\tilde{\eta}\epsilon\psi\tau[\Delta]\kappa\tilde{\eta}\kappa\text{ON}$, which only appears from the eleventh century, and the usage of the inverted genitive $\text{EO}\Delta\text{OY } \epsilon\tilde{\eta}\tilde{\eta}\tilde{\lambda}$ “our Lord,” which also appears to be later development still present in contemporary Nobiin. Both occur only in this particular sentence in SC.

All in all, based on the very preliminary linguistic evidence and the proximity of SC to L and the family of S, P₃ and BL, we may conclude that the Old Nubian pseudo-Chrysostomian “Sermon on the Venerable Cross” is the product of a scribe copying around the eleventh century from an Old Nubian translation of a Greek manuscript with a production date no later than the seventh-eighth century. The initial translation from which SC was copied thus belongs to the formative period of Christianity and Christian literacy in Nubia.

6 Aspects of the Translation

Several aspects of the translation appear to be unique to the Old Nubian version. It is not always clear whether we are dealing with the reflection of a Greek original whose specific formulation has not survived in the other remaining witnesses, or whether these are inventions of the Nubian translator, trying to

⁶³ See Browne, *Old Nubian Dictionary*, 123–24.

adapt the homily to the Nubian cultural and religious context in which it was to be deployed. This will probably remain an unsolved problem, but we will discuss here several particularities of the Old Nubian translation that cannot be immediately related to other witnesses, and which at the same time offer us an insight in the background of this text.

As already stated, SC is the only witness together with L and the Syriac tradition that preserves the verb “to bear” in SC 13.13. Moreover, SC appears as the only witness that uses *παρθενολο* “from the virgin” in SC 13.13 to translate *ἐκ γυναικός* “from the woman.” We know that the cult of Mary Theotokos was prominent in Nubia,⁶⁴ and obviously in the frame of this veneration the emphasis on the virginity of Mary adds significant dogmatic weight to the statement and offers valuable insight into the Nubians’ Christological understandings.

In SC 9.15–16, SC is the only witness to have *ΜΟΥΚΚΕΚΑΕΙ ΟΥΛΓΕΛΛΑΔΤΟΥ ΕΙΔΡΛ ΜΙΝΛΓΟΥΛ* “ragers (i.e., heretics) who listen and don’t understand” instead of *οἱ αἰρετικοί, οἱ ἀναγινώσκοντες καὶ μὴ ἐπιγινώσκοντες* “heretics who read and don’t understand,” giving us an insight into the context in which SC was used: one in which (Nubian) literacy was certainly not (yet) widespread and the teachings of Christianity relied mainly on oral transmission.

Also the translation of *ΜΟΥΚΚΕΚΑΕΙ* from the verb *ΜΟΥΚΚ* “to rage”⁶⁵ for *αἰρετικοί* gives us a sense of how the idea of heretics was transmitted in Nubian Christianity—those who rage and who should be contrasted to the “gentle and mild” of (9). At the same time, the usage of this particular verb here recalls SC 5.14 *ΜΟΥΚΚΟΛΓΟΥΚΑΚ*, which describes those who rage against the rulers and whom Christ calls “dogs”—again in nice contrast to the “sheep” of (9). In other words, heresy is connected to a disregard for authority. Against the heretics, who don’t listen, we find those who in SC 14.13–14 *ḏeṣḳṭloḏal ... oulgā* “listen with patience” a rendering of Greek *φιλοσοφεῖν* “to philosophize.”

As with *αἰρετικοί*, the translator of SC was faced with the task to come up with Nubian equivalents for highly specialized Greek religious vocabulary. We already saw how *ἀνάστασις* “resurrection” was rendered with the loanword *ḏnṣṭ*. But we also find in SC 9.20 and 17.5 *ḏalḥkanḡouka* for *συναμφότερον* and

64 Małgorzata Martens-Czarnecka, *The Wall Paintings from the Monastery on Kom H in Dongola* (Warsaw: Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology, 2011), 168–79; Dobrochna Zielińska, “The Iconography of Power—The Power of Iconography: The Nubian Royal Ideology and its Expression in Wall Painting,” in *The Fourth Cataract and Beyond. Proceedings of the 12th International Conference for Nubian Studies*, eds. Julie R. Anderson and Derek A. Welsby (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 943–49, esp. 946–48.

65 With Nobiin cognate *ΜΟΥΚΚ* “pulsieren, schlagen (Puls); wallen (Blut); pochen (im Kopf).” Khalil, *Wörterbuch der Nubischen Sprache*, 69.

SC 9.19 $\alpha\kappa[\Delta]\alpha\tau\tau\omicron\gamma$ and SC 17.4 $\alpha\kappa\Delta\alpha\kappa\tau\omicron\gamma$ for $\omicron\iota\kappa\omicron\nu\omicron\mu\iota\alpha\nu$. In both cases we are probably dealing with neologisms that have not been attested elsewhere in the Old Nubian corpus. $\bar{\Delta}\bar{\Delta}\bar{\eta}\bar{\kappa}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\eta}\bar{\gamma}\bar{o}\bar{\gamma}\bar{\kappa}\bar{\alpha}$ appears to contain the same root as $\bar{\Delta}\bar{\Delta}\bar{\omega}$ “twenty,” with the ending $-\bar{\alpha}\bar{\eta}$ also attested in dual constructions,⁶⁶ while $\alpha\kappa\Delta\alpha\kappa\tau\omicron\gamma$ is perhaps related to the verb $\alpha\kappa$ “to sit, remain.”⁶⁷

Another, more subtle problem is found in SC 10.17 $\tau\bar{\lambda}\bar{\lambda}\bar{\iota}\bar{\kappa}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\Delta}\bar{\epsilon}\bar{\Delta}\bar{\omega}\bar{\eta}\bar{\nu}$ $\bar{\Delta}\bar{\epsilon}\bar{\rho}\bar{o}\bar{\eta}\bar{\alpha}$ $\bar{\epsilon}\bar{\tau}\bar{\kappa}\bar{\lambda}\bar{o}\bar{\epsilon}\bar{\iota}\bar{o}\bar{\eta}\bar{\nu}$ $\bar{\pi}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\delta}\bar{\iota}\bar{\mu}\bar{\mu}\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\bar{\nu}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\lambda}\bar{o}$ “He pertained(?) to divinity. He does not divide from humanity” for Greek $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\acute{o}\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\alpha}\gamma\omega\ \tau\eta\ \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\tau\eta\tau\iota$, $\tau\acute{o}\ \delta\epsilon\ \tau\eta\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\acute{o}\tau\eta\tau\iota\ \acute{\alpha}\mu\epsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\omega\varsigma$ “and one I induct to divinity, while the other to humanity undividedly.” The adverb $\acute{\alpha}\mu\epsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\omega\varsigma$ “undividedly” is only preserved in fourteenth-century V1 and V2 and the Syriac tradition.⁶⁸ This phrase is of particular theological importance, as it defines the double nature of Christ as both human and divine, but whereas Greek uses the single verb $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\alpha}\gamma\omega$, Old Nubian has two different verbs $\bar{\Delta}\bar{\epsilon}\bar{\rho}\bar{o}\bar{\eta}\bar{\alpha}$ and $\bar{\pi}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\delta}\bar{\iota}\bar{\mu}\bar{\mu}\bar{\eta}\bar{\eta}\bar{\nu}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\lambda}\bar{o}$ from $\bar{\Delta}\bar{\epsilon}\bar{\rho}$ “to apply, reckon *vel sim.*” and $\bar{\pi}\bar{\alpha}\bar{\delta}$ “to divide” governing two different postpositions, respectively $-\bar{\Delta}\bar{\omega}\bar{\eta}\bar{\nu}$ “downward from” and the locative $-\bar{\lambda}\bar{o}$. It remains unclear why the translator decided to use the semantically specific $-\bar{\Delta}\bar{\omega}\bar{\eta}\bar{\nu}$, which suggests a downward movement, over the common locative $-\bar{\lambda}\bar{o}$ as in the second part of the phrase.

Finally, in the list of things that Jesus creates, there is reference to angelic emanations (SC 18.25–19.5), namely $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, $\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\alpha\gamma\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, $\theta\rho\acute{o}\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, $\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \chi\epsilon\rho\upsilon\beta\acute{\iota}\nu$, $\tau\alpha\ \sigma\epsilon\rho\alpha\phi\acute{\iota}\nu$, $\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\xi\omicron\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ (S, f. 71^v, lines 15–19), which translates “Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Cherubim, Seraphim, Authorities and Powers.” While our translator renders all these beings as abstract entities, he translates $\acute{\epsilon}\xi\omicron\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ “Powers” not with an abstract noun, but rather with the circumlocutionary SC 19.4–5 $\bar{\pi}\bar{\alpha}\bar{o}\bar{\gamma}\bar{\kappa}\bar{o}\bar{\eta}\bar{\kappa}\bar{\iota}\ \bar{\kappa}\bar{o}\bar{\eta}\bar{\delta}\bar{\iota}\bar{\lambda}\bar{\gamma}\bar{o}\bar{\gamma}\bar{\lambda}$ “those who have authority.” The same translation can be found in SC 12.1, but there the translator renders the biblical citation Eph. 6:12, where the $\acute{\epsilon}\xi\omicron\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ “Powers” may be understood to refer to persons who hold the authority in this world rather than among spiritual beings, as is contrasted in the whole Pauline quote: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (NIV). Unless this is an instance of a translation that instead of being thoroughly worked, was rather simply copied from a similar passage in the same sermon, then it is tempting to propose that the translator did not understand

66 Browne, *Old Nubian Grammar*, 31, § 3.5.1f.

67 Browne proposes a verb $\alpha\kappa\Delta\alpha\kappa$ “to set up.” Browne, *Old Nubian Dictionary*, 8.

68 Browne did not collate the Vatican Greek witnesses and therefore proposes a reconstructed $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\ \tau\acute{o}\ \mu\eta\delta\alpha\mu\acute{\omega}\varsigma\ \delta\iota\alpha\chi\omega\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\alpha\iota$. Cf. Browne, “The Greek Vorlage of the Syriac Version,” 39n12.

this angelic hierarchy, or even that the traditions upon which later angelology was developed in Nubia had not yet reached the region or had not been made part and parcel of the spiritual milieu in which the translator was working.⁶⁹

6.1 *Rhetorical Figures*

Even though the translator displayed a remarkable competence of Greek and complicated grammatical constructions were often rendered faithfully in Old Nubian, there are certain moments where it is apparent that his choices are idiosyncratic and show an independent rhetorical style. Sometimes, the translator appears to consciously enforce the rhetorical thrust of the text by engaging in wordplay, for example in the following rhetorical question:

- (5) SC 1.12–14 ⲉⲕⲁⲣⲓⲁⲣⲁ ⲉⲕⲟⲣⲁⲣⲉ [ⲟ]ⲩⲛ ⲉⲓⲟⲓⲟⲩⲁⲛⲛⲟⲩ ⲉ[ⲓ]ⲣⲗ[ⲟ]ⲣⲱⲉⲓⲁ ⲉⲓⲟⲣ-
 ⲧⲉⲛⲟⲕⲗⲕⲁ.
iskarigra ḡokor-d-r-e oun eig-ijj-annou
 INTER.how marvel.TR-INTEN-PRS-1SG.PRED 2PL.GEN zeal~INT-NMLZ?
eig-lo-gōēia eig-(i)r-t-enok-il-ka
 fire-LOC-than zeal-TR-NMLZ-COMP-PRS-ACC
 “How shall I marvel at your zeal, which is more zealous than fire?”

The effort to achieve *captatio benevolentiae* is stressed almost excessively one would say by the repetition of ⲉⲓⲟ-ⲓⲟⲩ-, ⲉⲓⲣ-, and ⲉⲓⲟ-. All forms are based on the same root ⲉⲓⲣ “fire,” with ⲉⲓⲟ being an intensive form, which becomes even more intense as reduplicative ⲉⲓⲟⲓⲟⲩ.

Another rhetorical ploy are a number of onomatopoeia that can be distinguished by the presence of the rare letter *phi*, supposedly representing the bilabial voiceless fricative /f/. First we find in SC 4.1 ⲫⲟⲩⲫⲫⲓⲗⲟ in the context of those entering the depths of the sea to gather pearls. Browne suggests that it may be related to Andaandi *boww(i)* “to take a bath, swim,”⁷⁰ but this etymology is highly unlikely for phonological reasons. Other parallels in the Greek text do

69 Evidence of similar lists of angelic beings known and venerated by the Nubians abound. Suffice it to refer here to the so-called *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* by the Apostle Bartholomew that is preserved in the British Library manuscript Or. 6804—BL 80 in Layton's Catalogue (see Bentley Layton, *Catalogue of Coptic Literary Manuscripts in the British Library Acquired Since the Year 1906* [London: British Library, 1987], 84–85) and dated in the tenth–eleventh century preserves several instances of such angelic lists (see Matthias Westerhoff, *Auferstehung und Jenseits im koptischen “Buch der Auferstehung Jesu Christi, unseres Herrn”* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999), 244–63).

70 Browne, *Chrysostomus Nubianus*, 86.

not seem to be available. A few lines down we find another *phi* in SC 4.10 τοφῆ, a hapax translating the Greek ζεφύρου “zephyr.”

Elsewhere the *phi* is attested for example in *The Attiri Book of Michael*, P. Attiri 2.i.2 ογφογρ- “to breathe” related to Nobiin ογφ “blasen, hauchen,”⁷¹ again in the context of being in the depths of the sea, and in St 9.3–4 we find τογφφ- “to spit.” What all these *phi*-words share is an onomatopoeic imitation of breathing or blowing, which suggests the possibility that also SC 4.1 φογφφιλο in fact should be interpreted as such an onomatopoeia: “in a *fuff* way,” perhaps indicating a deep breath before diving.

This brings us to perhaps the most spectacular instance of a double *phi* in SC, namely in the following example:

- (6) SC 7.10–12 ειαρτιγοyna παλκῖλαγῖλλεcῖ σαλκα πεσα ογτῖρ Δολλιρεcῖ
 εiciφφογ τῖλλῖ ·
ei-ar-t-igou-na pal-kit-la-gille-sin sal-ka
 know-TR-NMLZ-PL-GEN wide-NMLZ-DAT-ALL-EMP word-ACC
pes-a outir doll-ir-e-sin eis-iphphou
 speak-PRED place want-PRS-1SG.PRED-EMP what-INT
till-il-a
 god-DET-QUOT
 “Towards the sea of thoughts, I want to propose a discourse about what
 the **** is God.”

Again in the context of the depths of the sea, the homilist proposes to speak about the question “εiciφφογ is God?” The question word εici is well attested, but the hapax ending -ιφφογ appears to fulfill no particular grammatical function. Browne suggests it may be “a device for intensifying” εici,⁷² and based on our observations above about the onomatopoeic quality of the *phi*—and globally available parallels such as English *phew*—we would support an analysis here as an intensifier, suggesting a translation in English with an expletive: “What the **** is God?”

6.2 Vocabulary

6.2.1 Transgression and Freedom

In SC 13.13–15, the word Δεcτογ shows us the clear difference between the conceptual world of Greek and that of Old Nubian speakers. The root Δεc means

⁷¹ Khalil, *Wörterbuch der nubischen Sprache*, 88.

⁷² Browne, *Chrysostomus Nubianus*, 95.

6.2.3 Crime and Punishment

Another field where the distinction between Greek and Old Nubian conceptual frameworks prominently appears in SC is legal terminology.

In SC 11.18 the Greek term κρίσις “judgment” is rendered with the abstract noun ἈΡΜΙΚΙΔΕ(Ρ) “judgment.” The same word appears in SC 12.5 as a translation of κόλασιν “punishment” and SC 22.17–18 for τιμωρίας “retribution, vengeance.” The same root Ἀ(Ρ)ΜΙΚ appears in SC 12.11 and SC 15.11 ḏmċkaḏ- for κριτής “judge.” Elsewhere, the noun ἈΡΜΙΚΙΔΕ(Ρ) appears in a translation from Rev. 14:7, P.QI 1 9.i.6 ἈΡΜĲΚΔΕΝ for Greek κρίσεως and in P.QI 1 9.ii.3 for Greek βασανισμοῦ “torture, judgment.”

So, at first sight it already seems that our Nubian scribe does not make a distinction between (corrective) punishment that God has in store for our sins (κόλασις), the much heavier vengeance that Adam and Eve experience when being cast from Paradise (τιμωρία, which has the same root as τιμή “honor”), and even physical torture (βασανισμός). It is plausible that the initial meaning of the root Ἀ(Ρ)ΜΙΚ was related to (physical) punishment, only later began to include the sphere of (criminal) justice. This would be supported by the fact that the only verbal attestation of the root carries the meaning of physical punishment: P.QI 1 9.i.22 ἈΡΜĲΤΑΚΚΑΕΙΟΝ Εἴḏḏḏ translates Greek βασανισθήσεται “he will be judged/tortured.”

There is another nominal root related to the realm of justice that we find in SC, namely τῖδ, in the abstract noun ṬŌKANE in SC 15.12 τῖδκαεῖγοῦνα for δικαίων “of the just.”⁷³ Another derivative is ṬŌKANE, attested in the Old Nubian corpus as translation δικαίωμα “justification,” ἀλήθεια “truth,” δίκαιος “just,” εὐθύς “straight.” The same root τῖδ also appears in SC 9.12 τῖδḡ, for Greek ἀληθινόν “true,” with the bare root attested in Ps. 83:12, P.QI 1 2.ii.26 τῖδḡ[ΔΕ]κελκαλο, where it translates Greek ἀλήθειαν “truth.”

Thus two spheres of justice appear in Old Nubian: one, based on Ἀ(Ρ)ΜΙΚ, designating justice aimed at punishment and retribution, and another, based on τῖδ, which concerns itself with arriving at the truth. It should be noted that Ἀ(Ρ)ΜΙΚ dominates in SC, whereas forms based on τῖδ are relatively rare. Do we see here the personal interpretation of the Old Nubian translator of SC who wants to emphasize God’s punishment rather than truth? Or are we seeing traces of a semantic shift, in which later texts favored “native” Nubian neologisms based on τῖδ over the possibly pre-Nubian loanword Ἀ(Ρ)ΜΙΚ?

Both Ἀ(Ρ)ΜΙΚ and τῖδ can be combined with the verb πεῶ, as for example in SC 12.20 ΕΚΚΑ [Π]ΕῶΘΙΔΙΝΙΑ- for Greek ἵνα ἡμᾶς κρίνῃ “in order that he judge

⁷³ See for a full list Browne, *Old Nubian Dictionary*, 176.

us” and in St 7.5–6 ἡδὲ καὶ ἐν ᾧ πᾶσι δύνῃς “when you will judge in justice.” The verb itself is most probably a loanword from Sahidic or Akhmimic Coptic πᾶσι “to divide, separate.”⁷⁴

6.2.4 Coptic/Egyptian Loanwords

The text contains also a few other Coptic/Egyptian loanwords, which, however, always appear in a negative context. In SC 11.5, ἄϊδος “of Hades” is translated with ἔμεντεν, a loanword from Sahidic Coptic ἀμῆντε or Akhmimic Coptic ἐμῆντε “Hades, lit. the western place.”⁷⁵ The same holds for SC 16.15 ὄολ “leprosy(?)” which most probably derives from Coptic ὄολ “to loosen, dissolve, paralyze.”⁷⁶ In the section that contains the hymn on the cross, our translator used two Coptic loanwords to designate the things the cross destroys: SC 16.8–9 τὸν ἄλτῃ “altar” from Egyptian *h(w)t-ntr* “god’s mansion, temple,” preceded by the feminine article, which also gave Sahidic Coptic τ-ἔνεετῃ “monastery”;⁷⁷ SC 16.9–10 ἄρπαῖ “temple” from Sahidic Coptic ρπε or Bohairic Coptic ἐρφεῖ “temple.”⁷⁸ It thus appears as if the Old Nubian translator wanted to reject Egyptian practices in favor of the Nubian Christian practices and vocabulary.

6.3 Metrical Features and the Hymn on the Cross

With regard to the “Attiri Book of Michael,” consisting of two parchment pages found in Attiri, we argued that part of the text, namely the entirety of page P.Attiri 2.ii, displayed a metrical regularity that seemed to suggest that the text was rhythmically structured in phrases with a general length of 12 short syllables (with long syllables counting for 2 short ones).⁷⁹ SC features two passages in which we suspect a similar metrical structuring. The first passage is from SC 18.5–12, the second is the long section of the “Hymn on the Cross” from SC 14.15–16.20.

In SC 18.5–12 we find four sentences, three of which begin with τᾶλλο as in P.Attiri 2.ii. The first sentence is of length 12, while the second, third, and fourth

74 W.E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), 77a.

75 Ibid., 8b.

76 Ibid., 558a.

77 Ibid., 692a; Jaroslav Černý, *Coptic Etymological Dictionary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 289.

78 Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, 298b. Note that the same loanwords are also found in the *Stau-ros Text*, ἀρπαῖ and τὸν ἄλτῃ. Different from SC, St is supposed to have been translated from Coptic. So perhaps these more “Coptic looking” loans (with *phi* and *hori*) provide further evidence for that thesis. See also Gérard Roquet, “Sur l’origine d’un hapax en vieux nubien: τὸν ἄλτῃ,” *Bulletin de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale* 71 (1971): 97–118.

79 Van Gerven Oei et al. (eds), *The Old Nubian Texts from Attiri*, 54–56.

sentences have syllable counts of respectively 11/12, 12/13, and 13/14, with potentially long syllables counted as either single or double. So the second and third could possibly fit the 12-syllable scheme, whereas the final sentence may contain 14 syllables, something which has also been attested in P.Attiri 2.ii, perhaps as a coda of sorts.

Metrical considerations could also give a possible explanation for the unique alteration in this sequence between present and first past tenses, where the Greek has only aorist participles. The difference between the two tense morpheme sometimes makes a difference of one syllable, thus allowing the translator to “adjust” the syllable count to fit the rhythmical scheme.

A similar device is used in SC 14.15–16.20, the “Hymn on the Cross,” where the text alternates between two spellings of the word borrowed from Greek σταυρός: ἑταῦρος and σταῦρος. The former is the “correct” form in Old Nubian (complex onsets are severely restricted) and contains three syllables, while the latter has two. Browne suggests that the latter forms are “carelessly written”⁸⁰ but it seems that they frequently appear in contexts where a syllable needs to be dropped to arrive at the number of twelve syllables. For example, SC 16.4–5 σταῦ|ρο|cχ| παρ|θε|νοc|ροῦ|να| Δοῦ|μαρ|τα|λο· “The cross is the continence of the virgins” and SC 16.14 ἑ|ταῦ|ρο|cχ| οΔ|Δελ|ροῦ|να| γεν|γρε|πα|λο· “The cross is the healer of the sick.”

Other devices used by the translator are for example the dropping of the -α of the accusative -κα in SC 14.16 Διο(λ)᾽ ἱϣϣκ and the dropping of the -α of the genitive -να in SC 14.18 οὔδε λροῦν and elsewhere. Of the fifty sentences in this section, at least 19 have exactly 12 syllables, while other lengths vary between 10 and 16 (again without estimating long and short syllables).

In none of these passages the Greek shows any comparable metrical component, so if it is indeed there, it must be a Nubian invention, or the remnants of a pre-Christian hymnical tradition superimposed on the newly arriving Christian texts.⁸¹ Until we have arrived at a full understanding of syllable structure length in Old Nubian and find parallels in historical or still extant traditional types of hymns, it will probably be difficult to conclusively ascertain the rhythmical character of these passages. However, there appears to be enough inexplicable orthographical variation in this otherwise carefully crafted text to rule out the interpretation offered by Browne. For if the scribe indeed made so

80 Browne, *Chrysostomus Nubianus*, 21.

81 See for example, the hymn to Apedemak from Mussawarat in Vincent Rondot, “Les dieux de Méroë,” in *Méroë: Un Empire sur le Nil*, ed. Michel Baud (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2010), 194.

many mistakes writing $\sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma$ instead of $\tilde{\sigma}\tau\alpha\upsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma$, he could have easily gone back and added the supralinear strokes, in the same way he has made other corrections throughout the text.

6.4 *Pronouns, Forms of Address, and the Credo*

The Old Nubian translator clearly had his own ideas about how to render speakers and addressees, sometimes at a marked difference from the other manuscript traditions. We already saw in example (2) how a misreading of a misspelt Greek ending led to a reinterpretation of the persons in a citation from John 8:51.

Another example is his insistence to use the first person plural form $\epsilon\tilde{\mu}\mu\omicron$ “we know,” in the Credo-like section, whereas all Greek witnesses have $\omicron\tilde{\iota}\delta\alpha$ “I know.” It should be noted that SC preserves what looks as the most complete list of phrases, thus suggesting that the translator was working in a very early phase of the transmission of the text, when variants were still very sparsely introduced.

This emphasis on the “we,” including both the speaker and his audience, is also found in SC 13.1–3 $\mu\alpha\kappa\alpha\lambda\eta\ \Delta\iota\varsigma\eta\alpha\ \epsilon\kappa\kappa[\Delta]\ \Delta\iota\mu\epsilon\eta\kappa\alpha\eta\epsilon\kappa\alpha\ \tau\epsilon\eta[1\tilde{\Delta}]\cdot\ \mu\alpha\psi\psi\iota\varsigma\eta\alpha\ \epsilon\kappa\kappa\alpha\ \tau\alpha\eta\ \Gamma\alpha\Delta\kappa\alpha\ \delta\iota\eta\eta\epsilon[\eta\eta]\tilde{\Delta}$. “Therefore he died so as to give us immortality. He was hungry so as to fill us with his flesh.” In both sentences, the Old Nubian translator uses the first person plural inclusive $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\alpha$ “us” as the object, where all Greek witnesses have $\sigma\epsilon$ “you (sg.).” But then in the next phrase, we suddenly find the very marked form $\eta\Delta\kappa\alpha$ “you (sg.)” in SC 13.4–5 $\delta\epsilon\kappa\kappa\iota\varsigma\eta\alpha\ \eta\Delta\kappa\alpha\ \tau\alpha\eta\ \Delta\iota\varsigma\eta\alpha\ [\Gamma\iota\delta(?)]\delta\epsilon\eta\eta\tilde{\Delta}$. “He was thirsty so as to make you drink his blood,” after which the scribe return to the regular $\epsilon\kappa\kappa\alpha$ “you” (sg.) rendering Greek $\sigma\epsilon$. Are we dealing here was a mistake of the scribe in the first two sentences, which he only realizes in third? Or is this a deliberate alteration, showing us something about the Nubian conception and practice of the Eucharist, where the priesthood and congregation participated in different manners and degrees? The so-called *Nicene Canons* text in Old Nubian (DBMNT 714) preserves such rules and we will return to its analysis in a future study.

7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the Old Nubian witness SC of the pseudo-Chrysostomian “Sermon on the Venerable Cross” (CPG 4525), by comparing it with a selection from the Greek, Latin, and Syriac witnesses, while anchoring it within the tradition of Nubian manuscript production. By inspecting peculiar aspects of the Old Nubian translation we were able to establish with a

considerable degree of certainty that SC is a copy from an earlier Old Nubian manuscript, which in turn was a translation from Greek. Based on a number of striking parallels with L (sixth-seventh century) and the family of S (eighth-ninth century), P₃ and BL, as well as linguistic aspects of the translation, we propose a dating of the copy around the eleventh century, with the original translation dating no later than the seventh-eighth century.

In his introduction to SC, Browne suggests that “the translator seems to have adequately rendered most of the text, in a few places his grasp of Greek may likely have been deficient.”⁸² In our evaluation, however, it appears that the translator had overall a good grasp of Greek, able to render complex passages into well-written Old Nubian, at places exhibiting a remarkable inventiveness in bending the language to his rhetorical needs. Many of the “errors” in the translation can be attributed to a deficient *Vorlage* or a general confusion of vowels in inflectional endings, which was widespread in the region. Considering that the translator must have worked in the early stages of Old Nubian asserting itself as a literary and religious language, this translation should be considered a *tour de force* that must have made considerable impact on the way Old Nubian became the language of statecraft and religion in the Medieval Nubian kingdoms, at the expense of Coptic and Greek. At the same time, the incorporation of “native” rhythmical devices, such as the dodecasyllabical metre, offers a candid view of the syncretic nature of Nubian Christianity.

We have moreover gleaned from the analysis of the content of sermon CPG 4525 that the preacher addresses his audience as peers, who only assume the position of learners in the context of his preaching. Such peers can either be conceived as brothers in a monastery, as indicated by his calling them precisely ⲉⲗⲗⲁⲉⲣⲟⲩⲉⲕⲉ “brothers” in SC 11.12–13, or as apprentices for priesthood and the pastoral service, as can be conjectured from SC 17.6–11, where the homilist of SC states that his goal is to make the members of his audience ⲟⲩⲗⲗⲁⲕⲕⲉⲣ- “teachers.” We are therefore inclined to believe that in its original phase CPG 4525 came to Nubia as a sermon to be delivered for the education of priests and novices in order to understand the mysteries of the Trinity, aspects of Christology, and the Glory of the Cross.

Gradually, it seems that the hymnical part for the praise of the glorious cross became what was most important from CPG 4525 in the frame of Nubian Christianity. It was thus copied to be deposited by the cross in the Church of Jesus at Serra East, just like the work known as the *Stauros Text*, which shares the same hymn in the same form, as analyzed here in § 6.3. In this second phase

82 Browne, *Chrysostomus Nubianus*, 24.

of CPG 4525 in Nubia, the work became an integral part of Christian practice in the Nubian Church, and consequently the ideas about religious and secular life in it may very well mirror the respective lives of Nubian Christians in the medieval era.

Finally, as archaeological evidence shows, SC seems to have assumed a very different role. It was placed almost as a foundation deposit below the entrance of a homestead at the town of Serra, having being moved from the church. Either this happened due to some liturgical change that made its presence in the church redundant; because someone buried it there to be protected in view of the tumultuous conditions of Late Christian Nubia;⁸³ or because it was returned to the family of the original donors as token of their close cultic relations with the Cross. It is in any case clear that in the last centuries of Nubian Christianity, the personal relationship with the divine was more prominent than the one that passed through Church hierarchy, and thus more in accordance with the type of prophylactic/magical Christian faith and practice as proposed by Giovanni Ruffini.⁸⁴

For us, however, SC retains all its value as the most eloquent witness of Patristic literature in Old Nubian. As we discussed in §3.2, there are three more manuscripts preserving Patristic literature in the same language. Therefore, one of the most immediate future avenues would be an attempt to establish a dating for these documents as well, also taking into account the Greek homiletic fragments found in the same region. cursory inspection of the other Old Nubian homilies during our work on SC has revealed that there are remarkable parallels between the texts and overlaps in morphology and vocabulary that may not be entirely accidental.

A dating of these homilies and a more precise dating of the other translations from the corpus of Christian texts would allow us to start drawing an outline of the spread of Christianity and Christian literacy and the expansion of the Old Nubian language to other spheres of life—from a language that was initially limited to the private sphere to a language fully practiced in the spheres of government, religion, and law. Careful philological work needs here to go hand in hand with theoretical advances in the linguistic description of the language and its development over time. We hope that this article offers a glimpse of how such a cross-disciplinary approach could yield its fruits.

83 See Bruce Williams, *Excavations at Serra East*, vol. XIII (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, forthcoming).

84 Giovanni Ruffini, "The Meinarti Phylactery Factory: Medieval Nubian Ostraka from the Island of Michael," *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 42 (2012): 273–300.

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